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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a contemporary literary movement, "New Nonfiction." New Nonfiction is described as a reaction against the hermeticism of the modern novel, the abstractions of historical scholarship, and the impersonal, sensational, and formulaic reports of the mass media. It is a written narrative that connects private sensibility with public event. The progenitors of the New Nonfiction, like the novel, can be traced back at least to the time of Defoe, when journalism, fiction, and history were difficult to tell apart. This paper, while focusing on the works of Norman Mailer and Hunter S. Thompson, lists other authors whose works can be classified under the subgenre New Nonfiction; it also discusses developments, in journalism and in the novel, that precipitated the New Nonfiction. The rise of the popular press and its expansion of focus, the inward turn of the novel and its subsequent decline during the first half of the twentieth century, and the complexity and accelerated rate of change in modern civilization are cited in this paper as factors contributing to the development of the New Nonfiction in literature. (RL)

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THE NEW NONFICTION

The New Nonfiction is a movement which I believe to be the most recent development of major significance in what Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg call "the great, continuing and inexorable process in which narrative art is involved."[1] Before attempting any definition of the New Nonfiction, the progenitors of which, like the novel, can be traced back at least to the time of Defoe, when journalism, fiction and history were as difficult to tell apart as were the classes of the new urban society, before attempting a definition or tracing the dialectic by which these narrative forms again coalesced in the past ten years or so and resulted in what Norman Mailer has called "a radical bridge"[2] or synthesis which is the New Nonfiction, before tackling all of this, I would like to provide a field of reference by listing some of the writers and works which first suggested to me that the inexorable process that Scholes and Kellogg follow in their study The Nature of Narrative was moving in this direction.

First of all there is Mailer, whose last eight books all fall in the category of the New Nonfiction. His 1968 work, The Armies of the Night: History As a Novel, the Novel as History,[3] is the first and best of these, largely because his involvement in the events described was deeper, and provided the connection between the public world of history and the mass media and that interior world of private sensibility which was first explored fully by the modern novel and now exists as one of its few remaining enclaves.

Next there is Hunter Thompson, who has published three works which could be included in the sub-genre of the New Nonfiction, but whose Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream,[4] published in 1971, is, like Mailer's Armies, the one which occupies most fully what Hawthorne called the "neutral territory" between the "Actual and the Imaginary."[5] Thompson's interest in Fear and Loathing, like Mailer's in Armies, is situated as much in character as in event, and for both writers neither is as quite as important as the relations between the two, between subject and object, or what the German critic Robert Hartle has called the "intensive totality" of the self and the "extensive totality" of the world.[6]

Truman Capote's In Cold Blood (1965), E. L. Doctorow's Ragtime (1975), Joan Didion's Slouching Toward Bethlehem (1968), The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965), Frank Conroy's Stop-Time (1967), Tom Wicker's A Time to Die (1975), some of Tom Wolfe's and John Hersey's books, and earlier works like Oscar Lewis' The Children of Sanchez (1961), Lillian Ross's Picture (1952) (a book that many readers of The New Yorker consider to be the first non-fiction novel), James Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941), George Orwell's Homage to Catalonia (1938), and Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer (1934) (which Edmund Wilson mistakenly believed to be a novel) could all be included, at least provisionally, in my proposed sub-genre--indeed, many works from a much earlier time like Walden, Whitman's Speciman Days, The American Scene by James and Twain's Life on the Mississippi, not to mention some of the writing of English authors like Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle and Newman could be brought into the discussion. Obviously, I cannot discuss all these works or their forebears all the way back to Defoe's A Journal of the Plague Year, and before that I suppose, although I will make some fairly large suggestions about the non-fiction spine of narrative literature at the conclusion of my paper. I will refer to a few of these works, Mailer's and Thompson's mainly, but again, my object is to account for the rise in the last ten or fifteen years of a sub-genre which has been called everything from the "lyric documentary" to "total-imaginative-truth prose,"[7] but which I call for lack of a better term, the New Nonfiction. It is likely that we will have to go again to the Romance languages to borrow a suitable descriptive term, as we did for the romance and novel.

The imaginative impulses behind all of the contemporary works I have named are, of course, varied, but to a large degree each of them is a response to what has been called the crisis of the personal in the twentieth century. With a few notable exceptions, no other written narrative form in recent times, not history, journalism, nor the novel has been able to connect private sensibility with public event, the extensive world of Marx with the intensive world of Freud. The New Nonfiction is a reaction against the hermeticism of the modern novel, the abstractions of historical scholarship and the impersonal, sensational and formulaic reports of the mass media. To adapt a phrase of Goethe's, nothing separates the world of the modern novel

from the world of the media but an abyss.

This has not always been the case. In the time of their origin the ambits of the novel and the newspaper overlapped; both provided all they could. Norman Podhoretz has pointed out that until newspapers began to be sold cheaply novelists had a heavy responsibility for bringing the news. "The word 'novelist,'" he explains, "originally meant an innovator or newscarrier.... But what sort of news? Any sort. News of what other people were like; news of what places, familiar as well as strange, were like; news of how the world worked; news of how the mind worked; news of social relations; news of personal relations; news of manners, news of morals. Even, it should be added, technical news--about matters like printing (Balzac) and whaling (Melville)."[8] The novel of course, gave more play to the experience of the individual than did journalism, but the new narrative territory opened up by the upheavals of a burgeoning mercantile and industrial society was fair game for both. The content of the latest novel by Richardson was not far from the matter purveyed by The Spectator and Gentleman's Magazine. The reason for this, as Ian Watt has explained in The Rise of the Novel, is that both were consumed by roughly the same social class. The wealthy, university educated class were reading Pope, Warton and Grey and the poor were buying tracts and broadsides, drinking gin, and attending public hangings at Tyburn, but the growing middle class was devouring Addison, Steele, Defoe, Richardson and Fielding indiscriminately. Specialization of function, division of the narrative turf, was only just commencing at this time. Journalism, the novel and the secular pamphlets which described topical events were all intent on providing what Watt calls a "copious particularity of description and explanation,"[9] the news, as Podhoretz says, of how the world worked.

The upper classes were appalled at what the hacks of Grub Street--novelists, journalists and pamphleters--were producing, but because of the relatively refined expectations of the new middle class readers, those who could afford the five shillings for Robinson Crusoe, or pay for a yearly subscription to the newspapers and magazines, the bad had not yet driven out the good, despite the fears of Johnson and Goldsmith. The quality of the best papers came up to that of the novels of the time. The effects of Gresham's Law were not really felt until the middle decades of the nineteenth century when newspapers began to be sold for a penny and the novel began a slow retreat from its explorations of current history and turned to an examination of the interior life of the individual. "It was George Eliot who started it all," said D. H. Lawrence to a friend. "It was she who started putting all the action inside."[10]

It would be better to credit Flaubert for the novel's inward turn, but it hardly matters, James was influenced by them both, and it was he, along with Proust, Conrad and Dostoevsky who principally effected the displacement of the novel's center of gravity from society to self at the end of the nineteenth century. By the time of Joyce, as George Steiner has observed, the principal characteristic of the novel, was its "reduction in focus."[11] After society had been taken apart by the likes of Balzac and Dickens, the individual sensibility would be anatomized just as surely by James, Proust, Conrad, Joyce, Ford Maddox Ford, Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster.

To repeat, one of the major reasons that the novel ceased its exploration of the larger fabric of society was the rise of mass journalism towards the end of the nineteenth century. From the time of Richardson the scope of the novel continually widened. With War and Peace and The Red and the Black the whole of a national consciousness was captured. With Joyce, George Steiner says, the expansion is complete, in Ulysses we see "the imagination circling, surfeited and victorious, around the compendium, the summa of European civilization."[12] Yet the interior monologue technique used in parts of Ulysses points to the novelistic retreat from the world of society (and Freud's influence as well). This turning inward of the novel exactly parallels the rise of the mass circulation dailes of Pulitzer, Hearst and Scripps in the United States and those of Lord Northcliffe, T. P. O'Conner, W. T. Stead and later Lord Beaverbrook in Great Britain. The power of these "lords of the press," as they were called, was based on the growing recognition that the urban public "was more interested in news than in views."[13] The New Journalism was the name given by Matthew Arnold to the papers of O'Conner, Stead and others which were produced with the use of linotypes and high-speed presses and which made extensive use of illustrations, interviews and extravagant headlines in their coverage of vice, crime and political scandal.[14]

It is ironic that the old New Journalism was characterized by a radical expansion of focus, as its practicioners brought the sweaty events of brothels, slums, factories, and political wards into every urban home, while the idea that makes the present New Journalism new, according to Tom Wolfe, is that it provides not only "the full objective description" of current events, but also "something that readers had always to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters."[15] Arnold's New Journalism moved out; Wolfe's moves in. Arnold's was a response to the appetites of a new readership for the sensational and salacious and employed every advance in mechanical technique; Wolfe's is a response to the relatively sophisticated tastes of a generation of college graduates fully aware of the now-hallowed techniques of the psychological novel, and eager for more than the lurid exposes of the tabloids or the dull imprecisions of television and the establishment press. If we remember that George Eliot, Flaubert, Proust and James were "putting all the action inside," constricting the novel's focus, at roughly the same time that Arnold's New Journalism was expanding its focus by revealing the harsh and sordid conditions of urban life, if we note this reciprocal expansion and reduction, then the second wave of reaction against both the mass media and the modern novel by the New Journalism and the New Nonfiction, respectively, takes on a larger significance.

This is a rough and somewhat Procrustean overview which lops off some of the more interestin branches of the tree of the modern novel and ignores the achievements of modern journalism. Yet I believe my basic assertion that the emergence of the New Nonfiction (and the New Journalism) is largely attributable to the fact that journalism supplanted the novel as the fare of the reading public and forced it to explore those subjective realms where the traditional journalist could not go is unassailable.

We might see the field of narrative art divided between the intensive and extensive domains of Hartle; at one extreme lies Joyce's presentation of the pure pap of Molly Bloom's consciousness, and at the other is the documentary--the Warren Commission Report would be a fair example. If the artist is Homer or Dante or Cervantes or Joyce, the works he creates have vital connections to all points of the field. The detail in a modern novel of sensibility like The Ambassadors is exquisite, the technique is masterful, but it disregards the extensive or public side of life; it is over-developed in one direction and only James' brilliance can keep it from artistic failure. The history of the modern novel is one of successive, cumulative, efforts to achieve a greater psychological realism, and what has accompanied these efforts to grasp the quintessence of refined sensibility is a corresponding diminishment of objective reality. E. M. Forster complains that James is brilliant but "that most of human life has to disappear before he can do us a novel."[16] The belch and bite of reality, the maw of violence, corruption and sentiment that we read of in daily paper, or that we see on the small screen, is stricken from the record in the modern novel of sensibility. If we take Balzac's Human Comedy to represent the classic novel of the realistic mode, the sweep to Finnegans Wake is the inward turn of the spiral shell, at first encompassing the whole of a generation of society, then curving brilliantly and exactly to circumscribe the dream life of a single Everyman.

Writing on the decline of the novel in 1925, José Ortega Y Gasset said that the demands on each generation of novelists of necessity becomes greater because "the sensibility of the reading public becomes subtler and more fastidious." This has occurred, he says, because the novelists themselves (one thinks of James) "train their public by sharpening the perception, and refining the taste of their readers." The end is that the novel grows increasingly sophisticated and necessarily "becomes the undoing of scores of other works that used to be highly thought of."[17] Who wants to read Galsworthy after Lawrence, or Howells after James, and what can possibly come after Proust and Joyce? With Joyce the novel may have become all it could but the defection of the middle class reader to the daily paper (now supplanted by TV) took place long before he completed Ulysses.

T. S. Eliot once noted that "few things that can happen to a nation are more important than the invention of a new form of verse,"[18] the reason being, as critics like Lionel Trilling have noted, that the development of art forms reflects, anticipates and sometimes even promotes change within a culture. So the knot of causes for the turn inward of the novel at the end

the nineteenth century is difficult to untangle. The rise of the popular press, the ning out of the novelistic quarry, the complexity and accelerated rate of change in modern vilization are all contributing causes. To some degree artists like Proust, Woolf and nes were unwilling to address the larger social issues of the time and to some degree they shed to address these questions, as it were, from the inside.

Novelists had always known how to examine character, sensibility, personality. But now, ving lost their ability to see the larger world with any kind of coherence, they turned ward with a fury. Conrad tried to show the relativity of our perceptions of others, James plored the nuances of personal relations and attempted to present the growth of new aware-ss in a mind from the inside (but from the point of view of an observer); Dorothey Richardson ve us the interior monologue that goes on in each of our heads; Proust gave us seven volumes memories. Virginia Woolf captured impressionistically the consciousness of the passing nent in the minds of a dozen inordinately sensitive individuals; Kafka gave us a series of lividual hallucinations; Faulkner sponsored a walking tour through the mind of an idiot, and nally in the deepest penetration of all, Joyce attempted to reconstruct the dream life of a thic Irishman, H. C. Earwicker. But not even Freud could interpret the dreams that lay at bottom of the mind's well in Finnegans Wake. The novel from Madame Bovary and Adam Bede The Sound and the Fury and Finnegans Wake turned in upon itself, spiraling in tighter es, countersinking its perspective until it became unintelligible. And all the while the rld was changing, pulsing, disintegrating, moving in directions no one could have foreseen. media could barely keep up and there seemed to be a void at the heart of its reports: it ve only news, not views; it could not enlighten, illuminate, tell us why.

Historians were doing a better job, but given the enormity of their task, they had to divide the work. One wrote on the origins of a war, another on the aftermath, a third on a parti-ar aspect: Somewhere between books like The Rise of the West and A Short History of the chine Gun something was lost. Even where historians took the long view, like Toynbee, they not have the vision and assurance of someone like Gibbon. And, of course, the historical w was limited in that it could not go behind or beyond the available documents, diaries, . No historian could say, "At that point, the Czar thought to himself..." The historian restricted to empirical data, imaginative incursions were severely limited. Woe to the torian whose speculations took him too far from his facts. But historians should not be med for the failures of novelists. The fact is that novelists turned their imaginative lities to an exploration of created individuals; they did not, to use Mailer's phrase, vide "the secret sociology of society."[19] No, the novel became idiosyncratic, hermetic, jective. Readers had to get their ideas on how and why society was changing as best they ld--from the media, from their own experience, by extension from the psychological novel-s. There were exceptions, surprises, of course, there were historians who had a point of w, journalists who wanted to be more than a camera eye, novelists who left their cork-ed rooms and cast an informed glance over the events of the "real world." There were even e movies that gave a hint of the best qualities of the old novels. But finally there was oid. No narrative was doing the job of connecting the secret inner life of individuals h the larger events of history. The worlds of Freud and Marx were lost to each other.

As I have tried to suggest, the New Nonfiction has a long foreground. But it was not until Sixties that a group of writers, working independently along the same lines, produced a y of work that can now be recognized as a genuine literary movement. These writers came nly, and appropriately, from previous work as journalists or novelists. Their temperaments talents were richly varied, but they all implicitly accepted Philip Roth's 1961 statement cerning the bizarre and unpredictable nature of what passed for news. "It stupifies, it kens, it infuriates," Roth said "and finally it is a kind of embarrassment to one's own ger imagination." The frustration this produces in the writer, he concluded, results "not y in feelings of disgust, rage, and melancholy, but impotence, too, he is apt to lose heart ...turn to other matters, or to other worlds; or to the self."[20]

Obsessed by the implausible events of contemporary reality, and discouraged by the fumbling empts of the mass media to present these events in any but the most simplistic manner; con-ced of the value of the novelistic technique collected over two hundred years, but dismayed the novel's introspective tendency, writers like Mailer and Thompson backed into, fell into

New Nonfiction. Their intention was not to dismantle the mass media or superannuate the el. Indeed, both are reportedly at work on novels at this time. Rather, they wished to bine the special excellences of both modes, with shards of historical perspective as well, by such a synthesis create not only a new coign of vantage from which the monstrous and ne events of the modern world could be viewed, but also demonstrate the ways in which the ividual could observe, apprehend and perhaps even influence these events. Both Armies and r and Loathing retain every interest of psychological inwardness without relinquishing their chase on the "real world."

Except for noting the fact that the New Nonfiction is a reform or rejuvenation of the modern el, whereas the New Journalism is an attempt to rectify the mass media's failure to explore thing but, as Mailer says, "processes which are expanding rapidly or collapsing,"[21] I have made any distinctions between the two related movements. A pair of epigrams from Arnold Ezra Pound will provide a wedge and also move me closer to a discussion of the narrative ategy of Armies and Fear and Loathing. Arnold says: "Journalism is literature in a hurry;" nd says: "Literature is news that stays news." The line between the New Nonfiction and The Journalism is not distinct, but the reason why the former will stay news, while much of latter will hurry into oblivion, is that the New Journalists hardly have the time to reveal ir own revealing consciousness. Their frantic efforts to employ the techniques of fiction ene-by-scene construction, dialogue in full, an interior point of view and the recording of symbolic details of people's status life are the ones Wolfe names)[22] to present the events characters of contemporary history do not allow them the liberty to leisurely present their singular selves to the reader. One may come to know well the characters populating the ting of New Journalists like Gay Talese, Michael Herr, Joe McGinnis and Barbara Goldsmith, their own sensibilities are imperfectly rendered. Talese makes this clear in a 1970 panel cussion on the New Journalism where he says that one of the reasons for the large success of ler's recent books is that he did not have to introduce himself to his readers; he had used self as a character for years.[23] Indeed, half of the intent of Mailer's books from Advertise ts for Myself (1959) on has been to reveal (to adapt a phrase of James) the atmosphere of own mind. Armies is divided in two sections of unequal length, and at the beginning of shorter second section in which Mailer assumes the position of historian and presents a e or less objective overview of the events surrounding the 1967 March on the Pentagon, he narizes his narrative strategy in the preceding novelistic section where his own participa- n has been the center of attention. Mailer says that

> he has come to decide that if you would see the horizon from a forest, you must build a tower. If the horizon will reveal most of what is significant, an hour of examination can yet do the job--it is the tower which takes months to build. So the Novelist working in secret collaboration with the Historian has perhaps tried to build with his novel a tower fully equipped with telescopes to study--at the greatest advantage--our own horizon. Of course, the tower is crooked, and the telescopes warped, but the instruments of all sciences--history so much as physics--are always constructed in small or large error; what supports the use of them now is that our intimacy with the master builder of the tower, and the lens grinder of the telescopes (yes, even the machinist of the barrels) has given some advantage for correcting the error of the instruments and the imbalance of his tower. May that be claimed of many histories? In fact, how many novels can be out so quickly to use? (For the novel--we will permit ourselves this parenthesis--is, when it is good, the personification of a vision which will enable one to comprehend other visions better; a microscope--if one is exploring the pond; a telescope upon a tower if you are scrutinizing the forest.) (p. 245).

Thompson's book is not so much the "personification of a vision" as a series of scrupulously dered hallucinations induced by the ingestion of every form of mind-altering drug he and his orney, Dr. Gonzo, can lay their hands on. Assigned to cover the Mint 400 motorcycle race in Vegas by an unnamed sporting magazine, Thompson and his associate consume "a whole galaxy uppers, downers, screamers, laughers"[24] not for any simply hedonistic motives, but out of a ognition that the perverse and plastic reality of Las Vegas can be accepted only after they e systematically deranged their senses.

But Thompson is not one of the counterculture dropouts described by Joan Didion in Slouching ard Bethlehem. He has grave reservations about the assumptions of both cultures and like

Mailer he knows that his ambivalent feelings toward contemporary reality can be clarified only by immersing himself in that reality, despite the very real dangers of such a venture. As he tells Dr. Gonzo at the beginning of their journey, "I tell you, my man, this is the American Dream in action! We'd be fools not to ride this strange torpedo all the way to the end" (p. 11) The bizarre and drug-addled ride leads the pair at one point to a Vegas casino called the Circus-Circus where the gambling goes on twenty-four hours a day in the midst of a circus complete with high-wire trapeze acts, shooting galleries and penny arcade shucks of all kinds. The Bosch-like scene begins to tell on Gonzo and he informs Thompson, "I think I'm getting the Fear." Thompson replies, "We came out here to find the American Dream, and now that we're right in the vortex you want to quit...You must realize that we've found the main nerve." "I know," he said, "That's what gives me the Fear" (pp. 47-48). The story line of both books follows the sometimes anguished, sometimes humorous mediations of the participants between the imperatives of their own self-interest and pleasure and their searing concern for the moral life of the nation. Convinced that he must cross a Pentagon police line and be arrested, Mailer still holds out the chance that he will be released in time for a party the same night in New York. Halfway back to California, Thompson phones Gonzo and learns that they are scheduled to return to Vegas to cover a four day seminar on dangerous drugs sponsored by the National Conference of District Attorneys. "Buy the ticket, take the ride," Thompson says, "and if it occasionally gets a little heavier than what you had in mind, well...maybe chalk it off to forced consciousness expansion" (p. 89).

Of all the writers of the New Nonfiction mentioned previously, only Truman Capote fails to provide some viewpoint on the privileged viewpoint. In an interview conducted soon after the publication of In Cold Blood, Capote said, "My feeling is that for the nonfiction-novel form to be entirely successful, the author should not appear in the work."[25] Capote helped prepare the reading public for the later nonfiction of Mailer, Thompson, Doctorow and the rest, but his decision to eliminate himself as a character may relegate his book to footnote status in ten years. Capote has been most insistent on this exclusion, mentioning it in at least three interviews, but his position is belied by the achievements of Mailer and Thompson, achievements which are based largely on their willingness to present the mesh of relations between their own private, complex selves and the demanding public occasions to which they are witness. Locked in by circumstances and their own sense of obligation to undertaking "something which would not be easy to refuse but would be expensive to perform" (Armies, p. 16), both Mailer and Thompson recognized that the full meaning of their experience would not be captured unless their narrative accounts of it gave as much play to the teller as the told, American dreamer and American Dream.

Neither the fictional mode (novel, romance) nor the empirical mode (history, journalism) is an inherently superior way of examining the "intensive totality" of the self or the "extensive totality" of the world. Obviously, the fictional mode inclines toward the self and the historical toward the world, but the forms of each broad category, to a greater or lesser degree, explore both the world of Marx and that of Freud. Occasionally the opposite narrative pole is captured. Cellini's Autobiography seems more "fictional" than a novel like Dos Passos' U.S.A. A critic like John Simon misses the point when he says in his review of Armies that "people who can write novels as novels don't need to write them as history or vice versa."[26] The subject matter and artistic patterning of both history and the novel have often overlapped and informed each other, and the similarity of sub-genres like the Künstlerroman and the autobiography (Look Homeward Angel and The Tropic of Cancer, for example) often makes the generic partition between them meaningless.

The novel since its beginnings, at least, say, from the time of Robinson Crusoe has pretended to be real, pretended to be history or some form of non-fiction. Kierkegaard calls this "the old trick" of the novelist.[27] It is a poor trick; few readers have been fooled, yet it seems to be a necessary but transparent ploy. In truth, the novel does not hope to be formally identified as history, rather it only wishes to "come on" as history. Conversely, the New Non-Fiction "comes on" in just the opposite way. It appears to be novelistic because it tries to be. It seeks that fusion of realistic presentation and personal revelation that characterizes the classic realistic novel. Just as the novel has assumed the guise of history to increase its own acceptance, the New Nonfiction has borrowed the tactics of the novel now that the latter

has been enshrined as the premier narrative form of our time.

Mailer and Thompson are simply mirroring the efforts of Defoe and Fielding, making the real fictional, just as the earlier novelists had sought to make the fictional real. For if the novel can demonstrate its ostensible historical veracity to the degree of making us suspend our disbelief, cannot the superior work of nonfiction make us forget that we are reading a documentary, a report by a writer who is invincibly bound at some indeterminate line by the incontrovertible facts of history? What I am saying is that the New Nonfiction demonstrates that nonfiction is bifurcated (as fiction has always been), into ostensibly historical and fictional modes. We have nonfiction which comes on as history (Franklin's Autobiography, the Warren Commission Report) and as fiction (Tropic of Cancer, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men), just as we have novels which pretend to be real (Robinson Crusoe, Lord Jim), and those which do not (Tristam Shandy, Vanity Fair). Obviously this division by inferred historicity or fictionality cannot be applied to every narrative, nor should the "proper" genre of any work be overlooked. Still, such a scheme opens up the possibilities of applying the conventions and traditions of both modes to their counterparts and the consequent enlargement of our understanding of the possibilities of narrative generally.

The best of the New Nonfiction, I believe, will eventually merit favorable comparison with the classic works of nonfiction in American literature: Dana's Two Years Before the Mast, Thoreau's Walden, Whitman's Speciman Days and Democratic Vistas, Twain's Life on the Mississippi, James' American Scene, Henry Adams' Education, Hemingway's Death in the Afternoon and A Moveable Feast, Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer and Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. The time has come to realign our view of the continuum of American literature, to establish the existence and strength of a non-fiction spine bracing our literature. The books names above, with the addition of Franklin's Autobiography and the essays of Emerson and Thoreau and perhaps a few others, are the struts whose line forms a kelson that is twin and sister to the acknowledged novelistic backbone which spans the distance from Brockdon Brown and Cooper to Bellow or even Barthelme. One of the assumptions of this paper is that American literature possesses these twin spines or keels (the two are fused of course and share certain techniques and assumptions the way Siamese twins share the same substance), and it is the achievements of these contemporary writers, Mailer and Thompson especially, which have shown us the true bones.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford, 1966), p. 228.

[2]Norman Mailer, Advertisements For Myself (1959; rpt. N.Y.: Berkley, 1966), p. 338.

[3]Mailer, The Armies of the Night (N.Y.: New American Library, 1968).

[4]Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (N.Y.: Random House, 1971).

[5]Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter (N.Y.: Norton, 1961), p. 31.

[6]Robert Hartle, quoted by Paul Hernadi in Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1972), p. 18.

[7]The terms come from George Steiner and Seymour Krim, respectively. I cannot locate the references more exactly.

[8]Norman Podhoretz, "Bringing the News," Book Week (September 26, 1965), p. 8.

[9]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 56.

[10]E. T., D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record (London, 1935), p. 105.

[11]George Steiner, Language and Silence (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 79.

[12]Steiner, p. 79.

[13]Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 169.

[14]See Scott Donaldson, "The Old World, The New Journalism and the Novel," Sewanee Review, 82 (Summer, 1974), 527-37.

[15]Tom Wolfe, The New Journalism, with an anthology edited by Wolfe and E. W. Johnson (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 21.

[16]E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (N.Y.: Harcourt, 1927), p. 160.

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